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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Note verbale dated 2 August 2007 from the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations has the honour to forward the "Istanbul Commitments", the outcome document of the Seventh European Regional Conference of the International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies, held in Istanbul from 20 to 24 May 2007 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Turkey would appreciate it if the present note verbale and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 41.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 2 August 2007 from the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Seventh European Regional Conference of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Istanbul, 20-24 May 2007

The Istanbul Commitments

We, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Europe region, having met in Istanbul, Turkey from 20 to 24 May 2007 at our 7th European Regional Conference,

Recalling the Berlin Charter adopted at the 6th Regional Conference in Berlin in 2002, and taking account of the fact that the themes of health and care and migration have since become even greater humanitarian challenges facing Europe and the world,

Recalling Council of Delegates resolutions 2001/4 and 2003/10 on Movement action in favour of refugees and internally displaced persons and 2005/3 on Promoting respect for diversity and non-discrimination – a contribution to peace and friendship between peoples, as well as the Federation's Global Health and Care Strategy 2006-2010,

Noting that the 16th Federation General Assembly and the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to be held in November 2007 in Geneva will address these issues under the theme "Together for humanity",

Reaffirming our wish to bring our status as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field to the more effective service of the needs of the most vulnerable in our countries, and to use this status in our advocacy with governments, international organisations and other partners,

Recognising that Europe is a region with great economic and social disparities, making mutual support and solidarity standing as an essential component of our mission,

Reiterating the need to build effective partnerships and alliances within the Movement as well as with other partners in Europe and elsewhere, recognizing that no one organization can address these challenges alone,

Being determined to follow the patterns of cooperation established by the Berlin Charter in 2002, and to work within the Global Agenda and the New Operating Model of the International Federation,

Noting with approval the reports of the working groups as well as their preparatory documents and acknowledging their significant contribution to the outcome of the Istanbul Conference,

Agree to provide resources and our knowledge to address the human vulnerabilities caused by poverty, public health threats, migration, forced

displacement, demographic change, community tension and environmental challenges including climate change;

Acknowledge the serious challenge posed to our populations and communities by public health threats such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, mental illness, substance abuse and other public health emergencies. We emphasize the central place of our work in the field of health and care in meeting these challenges, including the use of a dual action approach combining preventive campaigns with care and support programs;

Acknowledge the value migrants[1] bring to enrich the host countries' societies in social, cultural and economic terms while also posing many challenges to those societies. We reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the Red Cross and Red Crescent is inclusive and open to all, fully engaged in the fight against racism, xenophobia, discrimination and social exclusion and for respect for diversity and human dignity;

Are determined to assert our right of access to all in need, irrespective of their legal status;

Make the following commitments:

1. Assess the vulnerabilities and capacities of our communities to ensure that our programmes and services meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our populations, including persons without the support of health or social welfare systems, persons in the migration cycle irrespective of their legal status and persons stigmatized or marginalized for any reason.

Health and social care

2. Engage in partnerships and alliances with affected groups, health and social care authorities and other actors in particular to act as a bridge builder, and to empower affected communities, groups and individuals.

Scale up programme implementation in key health and social care areas, particularly through partnerships on HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis by systematic and measurable activities and improved quality using evidence-based and evaluated programmes;

Raise awareness among the public to reduce stigma and discrimination and address humanitarian needs associated with such vulnerabilities as drug use, HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis, including through the use of campaigns organised in partnership with affected communities.

Increase our capacity to provide effective information on disease prevention, and to promote behaviour change and harm reduction.

Advocate for access to preventive measures, treatment and all relevant forms of health and social care.

Raise the profile and priority of the needs of our ageing populations, recognizing at the same time the important contributions older people make to the

[1] The term "migrant" includes, inter alia, asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, trafficked persons, irregular migrants and economic migrants.

work of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other organisations with a strong volunteer base.

Apply the six strategic directions of the Global Health and Care Strategy 2006-2010 — *Capacity building, Social Mobilization, Partnerships, Health in emergencies, Advocacy and community empowerment* — in our national plans of action.

Migration

3. Address the needs and vulnerabilities of people affected by migration in order better to protect, support and assist them. In particular we will pay attention to the promotion of respect for the rights and needs of individuals, including persons in detention and to the delivery of needs-based services and assistance with a special priority for asylum-seekers, refugees, irregular migrants, unaccompanied minors, and victims of trafficking in human beings. This will also include providing support to migrants in their efforts to develop a sustainable future based on equal opportunities and equal treatment.

Advocacy will focus on our unconditional access to migrants regardless of their status for the purposes of providing humanitarian assistance without being criminalised or otherwise penalised for that action.

We will insist on governments respecting the rights of all migrants, including in particular respect for and due application of the Principle of *Non-refoulement* and the provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and implementation by governments of all their international and national legal and human rights obligations. We will advocate for the regularisation of the status of all migrants whose status has been undetermined for a long period of time.

We will also intensify our advocacy for all States to become parties to the 1990 International Convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

Improve cooperation between National Societies in countries of origin, transit and destination in order better to protect and assist migrants and returnees and to strengthen partnerships with external actors working in this field. We will maintain and strengthen the well-established activities in the fields of Tracing, Restoring Family Links and Family Reunification.

Support the development of a Federation policy on migration, which should also benefit from the expertise of the ICRC in the areas of protection and restoring family links. This will facilitate the elaboration of coherent and comprehensive policies and plans of action by National Societies.

Strengthening capacities and cooperation

4. Work together to strengthen our community and volunteer base as the foundation for our work in addressing vulnerability and humanitarian needs, ensuring at the same time that this base reflects the composition of the population we serve.

5. At all levels, actively engage Youth in the design and implementation of all our programmes, encourage them to work with their peers and respond to their own needs as well as to the needs of entire communities and future generations.

6. Ensure that the Red Cross and Red Crescent is inclusive and open to all and actively recruit volunteers and staff regardless of any differences or distinctions so that all people can take an effective part in and own the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes relevant to them and their vulnerabilities.

7. Strengthen and build mechanisms for global and regional cooperation and collaboration, as a means of ensuring the fullest exchange of information and experience on best practice in addressing vulnerability and bringing support to all National Societies in need.

8. Mobilise adequate resources for capacity building and implementation of our programmes from governments and intergovernmental bodies such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, WHO-EURO as well as non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

9. Identify new partnership opportunities with our public authorities, particularly at local government levels, utilising our role as auxiliaries in the humanitarian field to build strategies and programs for the most vulnerable people in communities and stressing the importance of awareness-raising about vulnerability and the need for full respect for diversity.

Establishing indicators

We recognise the importance of and will establish common indicators of activities to assist the implementation and monitoring of these commitments. Such indicators will relate to:

(a) engagements with the public authorities, at national, district and local levels, on matters concerning vulnerability, health and dignity,

(b) partnerships established with public authorities and other organisations including those of affected groups,

(c) human, technical and financial resources mobilised,

(d) the provision of assistance to persons with special needs, health risks and high vulnerability, including persons in prison or detention,

(e) advocacy and programmes aimed at reducing the acute vulnerability of children, people living with HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, other disadvantaged groups and migrants,

(f) programmes to empower communities in support of respect for diversity, prevention and harm reduction,

(g) action taken to include affected groups – such as migrants, disadvantaged persons and persons facing stigma and discrimination – at all levels of governance, policymaking and management.

(h) diversity as reflected in our National Societies, in particular our volunteer base

(i) programmes undertaken with the inclusion of Youth in the design and implementation of actions in support of the most vulnerable.

(j) service delivery for the benefit of the most vulnerable, with particular reference to support provided to persons living with stigma and discrimination and persons without access to health, legal and other services provided under the law of the country.

We recognise that the humanitarian consequences of today's challenges cannot be addressed effectively by any one region, and we commit to bringing our experiences to the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2007, with the intention of developing a joint European pledge as well as pledges in partnership with governments on the ways in which we will address vulnerability together.

Follow up

We undertake to implement our commitments in our national context through concrete and measurable plans of action. We will share experience, knowledge and lessons learned, and will assist each other when requested.

We agree to report our achievements against these commitments within the context of the Accountability Framework adopted by the 15th General Assembly of the Federation in Seoul in 2005.

We commit to strengthen our reporting capacity and to provide sufficient resources to enable the Secretary General of the Federation to improve the reporting and consequently the implementation of our commitments.

We encourage the Governing Board, our Vice President and the Secretary-General to promote these commitments, thus facilitating our endeavours to save lives and alleviate human suffering on the basis of our Fundamental Principles.